

Washington, DC - Rep. Peter Welch issued the following statement in response to today's congressional hearings on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report assessing key benchmarks in Iraq. The report confirmed that Iraq has failed to meet all but three of eighteen critical benchmarks:

"This non-partisan investigation confirms what a majority of Americans and a growing majority of Congress already know: the President's policy in Iraq is a failure and it is time to bring our troops home.

"The President's original justification for this surge strategy was that it would facilitate the political and economic progress necessary in Iraq. But eight months later, while our American military has bravely kept its part of the bargain, the Iraqi government has failed to deliver on nearly every benchmark of success put forth by President Bush. The Iraqi Parliament has not passed needed legislation to promote Sunni-Shiite reconciliation, Iraqi security forces remain dominated by sectarian militias, and reconstruction funds are still sitting idle in Iraqi bank accounts.

"Regrettably, it appears that the President continues to cling stubbornly to his failed policy. Only in the Bush Administration is a failing grade considered a success.

"Since the President refuses to act, Congress must. And the U.S. House has. While we have passed legislation requiring the responsible withdrawal of troops from Iraq, our efforts have been blocked by the President and Congressional Republicans. As we press forward this month committed to ending this war, it is imperative that reasonable Republicans, like Sen. John Warner, acknowledge the urgent need to change course."